



## **House Bill 844**

### **Business Regulation - Cigarette, Other Tobacco Product, and Electronic Smoking Device Retailers - Nicotine Replacement Therapy Products (Make Quitting Convenient Act) -FAVORABLE-**

**I am writing to express my strong support for House Bill 844, the "Make Quitting Convenient Act,"** which addresses vital aspects of business regulation pertaining to cigarettes, other tobacco products, and electronic smoking devices. As a dedicated member of the Baltimore City Council, I believe that this legislation will have a positive impact on our community working toward a healthier society.

In 2018, after a sincere conversation with representatives from the Baltimore City Health Department, I introduced Baltimore City Council Ordinance 18-0311, Nicotine Replacement Therapy Products - Sale and Distribution which requires certain retailers to sell nicotine replacement therapy products and mandates certain retail display and packaging requirements. At the time, it was significantly easier in my district (District 8) and in Baltimore city to get nicotine products like cigarettes than it was to get products to help quit smoking. Breaking addiction is incredibly challenging when you don't have equitable access to smoking cessation products, which were only sold in a handful of pharmacies and grocery stores. When the majority of your constituents rely on cornerstores and gas stations for basic necessities, none of which sold cessation products, I, as the Chair of the Health Committee eagerly brought this legislation to address the inequity of access to smoking cessation products.

House Bill 844 aims to regulate and facilitate access to Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) products, providing an innovative approach to support individuals in their journey to quit smoking. Smoking cessation is a critical public health issue, and NRT products have proven to be effective tools in assisting people to overcome nicotine addiction. By streamlining regulations for retailers and ensuring the availability of these products, the proposed legislation aligns with our shared commitment to improving the health and well-being of our constituents.

In Maryland 11% of adult residents report smoking in 2023 (County Health Rankings & Roadmaps, n.d.). In Maryland 15.6% of high school youth reported currently using any tobacco product, including e-cigarettes in 2021. Among Maryland high school youth, 3.6% reported currently smoking cigarettes (CDC, 2023) .

Tobacco use remains the leading cause of preventable disease in the United States; access and promotion of smoking cessation products can lead to better public health outcomes. Smoking quadruples the risk of coronary heart disease as well as stroke. People who smoke are 25 times more likely to develop lung cancer than those who do not. When individuals take control of their

health and quit tobacco products, the risk of disease significantly decreases to levels of those who do not smoke.

Baltimore City has been at the forefront of addressing public health challenges, and I firmly believe that supporting House Bill 844 is in line with the mission to create a healthier and more prosperous communities across Maryland. The provisions within this legislation not only empower individuals seeking to quit smoking but also contribute to the overall reduction of tobacco-related diseases and associated healthcare costs. Additionally, it address the inequity of limited accesbility of smoking cessation products that many communities in Maryland face. By fostering a supportive environment for retailers to offer NRT products, we encourage a positive shift in our community's overall health outcomes.

**I urge this committee to vote favorable on House Bill 844, The Make Quitting Convenient Act.** Together, we can make significant strides towards a healthier and smoke-free future for our constituents. Should you have any further questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to reach out to me or my Direct of Policy, Kimberly Sauer at [kimberly.sauer@baltimorecity.gov](mailto:kimberly.sauer@baltimorecity.gov).

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kristerfer Burnett". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letter of each word being capitalized and prominent.

Baltimore Councilmember Kristerfer Burnett - *8th District*  
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